



**Billing Code: 4333–15**

## **DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

### **Fish and Wildlife Service**

**[FWS–R7–ES–2017–N181; FF07CMM00–FX–ES111607MRG01]**

### **Marine Mammals; Letters of Authorization to Take Pacific Walrus and Polar Bears in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas, Alaska**

**AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of issuance.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has issued Letters of Authorization for the nonlethal take of polar bears and Pacific walruses incidental to oil and gas industry exploration, development, and production activities in the Beaufort Sea and the adjacent northern coast of Alaska and incidental to oil and gas industry exploration activities in the Chukchi Sea and the adjacent western coast of Alaska. These Letters of Authorization stipulate conditions and methods that minimize impacts to polar bears and Pacific walruses from these activities.

**ADDRESSES:** These letters of authorization are available electronically at the following location: <http://www.fws.gov/alaska/fisheries/mmm/itr.htm>.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mr. Christopher Putnam at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Marine Mammals Management Office, 1011 East Tudor Road, MS 341, Anchorage, Alaska 99503; (800) 362-5148 or (907) 786-3844.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** On August 5, 2016, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published in the *Federal Register* a final rule (81 FR 52276) establishing regulations that allow us to authorize the nonlethal, incidental, unintentional take of small numbers of polar bears (*Ursus maritimus*) and Pacific walruses (*Odobenus rosmarus divergens*) during year-round oil and gas industry exploration, development, and production activities in the Beaufort Sea and adjacent northern coast of Alaska. The rule established subpart J in part 18 of title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and is effective through August 5, 2021. The rule prescribed a process under which we issue Letters of Authorization (LOAs) to applicants conducting activities as described under the provisions of the regulations. This rule replaced a similar rule, published on August 3, 2011 (76 FR 47010), which expired on August 3, 2016, and likewise prescribed a process under which we issued such LOAs.

Each LOA stipulates conditions or methods that are specific to the activity and location. Holders of LOAs must use methods and conduct activities in a manner that minimizes to the greatest extent practicable adverse impacts on Pacific walruses and

polar bears and their habitat, and on the availability of these marine mammals for subsistence purposes. Intentional take and lethal incidental take are prohibited.

In accordance with section 101(a)(5)(A) of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA; 16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.) and our regulations at 50 CFR part 18, subpart J, we issued LOAs to each of the following companies in the Beaufort Sea and adjacent northern coast of Alaska:

**Beaufort Sea Letters of Authorization**

<b>COMPANY</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>PROJECT</b>	<b>LOA Number</b>
Shell Exploration and Production Company, Inc.	Support services	Ice surveys and helicopter search and rescue training	15-01
Brooks Range Petroleum Corporation	Development	2015 Mustang Development Program	15-02
Global Geophysical Services, Inc.	Exploration	Winter seismic work	15-03
Geokinetics, Inc.	Exploration	Winter seismic work	15-04
Repsol E and P USA, Inc.	Exploration	Exploration drilling in the Colville River Delta	15-05
BP Exploration (Alaska), Inc.	Exploration	Winter seismic work	15-06
ExxonMobil Development Company	Development	Point Thomson Project	15-07 16-06 16-17
Hilcorp Alaska, LLC	Exploration	Liberty Geotech and Shallow Hazard Survey	15-08
Caelus Energy Alaska, LLC	Development	Nuna Project	15-09 16-01 16-12 17-06
Olgoonik Specialty Contractors, LLC	Remediation	Point Lonely, Oliktok Point, and Bullen Point DEW line sites	15-10
North Slope Borough	Production	Barrow pipeline upgrades	15-12 17-08
ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc.	Exploration	Greater Moose's Tooth	15-15
ARSC Exploration, LLC	Exploration	Placer Unit exploratory drilling	15-16

Peak Oilfield Service Company, LLC	Support services	Transportation activities on the North Slope	15–17 17–01
SAExploration, Inc.	Exploration	Akmaq seismic surveys on Canning and Sag River	15–18 16–03
Caelus Energy Alaska, LLC	Exploration	Tulimaniq Exploration Program in Smith Bay	15–19 16–09_a
Geokinetics, Inc.	Exploration	"Great Bear" 3d seismic on North Slope	15–20
Alaska Frontier Constructors, Inc.	Development	Gravel removal in the Sag River	15–21
ExxonMobil Alaska, LNG, LLC	Exploration	Alaska LNG Project surveys	16–02 16–18
Marsh Creek, LLC	Remediation	Legacy wells—Cape Simpson, Iko Bay, Barrow, and Avak	16–04 16–21
ENI U.S. Operating Company, Inc.	Development	Nakaitchuq North at Spy Island	16–05
ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc.	Exploration	NPRA seismic exploration	16–08
ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc.	Exploration	Exploration drilling	16–09_b 17–10
Fairweather, LLC	Exploration	Retrieval of mooring anchors in the Beaufort Sea	16–10
Caelus Energy Alaska, LLC	Production	Oooguruk Project	16–11
ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc.	Production	CPAI North Slope Alpine and Kuparuk	16–13
BP Exploration (Alaska), Inc.	Production	Prudhoe Bay	16–14
Savant Alaska, LLC	Production	Badami Project	16–15
Hilcorp Alaska, LLC	Production	Milne Point, Endicott, and Northstar Units	16–16
Olgoonik Construction Services, LLC	Remediation	Barrow legacy wells	16–19
ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc.	Development	GMT–1 Construction	16–20 17–09
Alyeska Pipeline Service Company	Production	TAPS activities	16–22
Armstrong Energy, LLC	Exploration	Colville River Delta drilling and geotech	16–23
BEM Systems, Incorporated	Remediation	Oliktok radar site	17–03
BEM Systems, Incorporated	Remediation	Bullen Pt. radar site	17–04
ConocoPhillips Alaska, Inc.	Exploration	"Bear" Winter Seismic East of Colville River	17–05

BP Exploration (Alaska), Inc.	Exploration	2017 Liberty Bathymetry Survey	17-07
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On June 12, 2013, we published in the *Federal Register* a final rule (78 FR 35364) establishing regulations that allow us to authorize the nonlethal, incidental, unintentional take of small numbers of polar bears and Pacific walruses during year-round oil and gas industry exploration activities in the Chukchi Sea and adjacent western coast of Alaska. The rule established 50 CFR part 18 subpart I and is effective until June 11, 2018. The process under which we issue LOAs to applicants and the requirements that the holders of LOAs must follow is the same as described above for LOAs issued under 50 CFR part 18, subpart J.

In accordance with section 101(a)(5)(A) of the MMPA and our regulations at 50 CFR 18, subpart I, we issued LOAs to the following companies in the Chukchi Sea:

#### **Chukchi Sea Letters of Authorization**

<b>COMPANY</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>PROJECT</b>	<b>LOA Number</b>
Shell Exploration and Production Company, Inc.	Support services	2015/2016 ice overflight surveys	15-CS-01
Shell Exploration and Production Company, Inc.	Exploration	Chukchi Sea exploration drilling	15-CS-02
Fairweather, LLC	Exploration	Retrieval of Shell's mooring anchors in the Chukchi Sea	16-CS-01
Olgoonik Fairweather, LLC	Exploration	Post Shell drillsite monitoring	16-CS-02

**Authority:** We issue this notice under the authority of the MMPA (16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.).

Dated: January 4, 2018

Gregory E. Siekaniec

Regional Director, Alaska Region.

Editorial note: This document was received for publication by the Office of the Federal Register on April 23, 2018.

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